

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Published by Ralph F. Cummings, Box 75, Fisherville, Mass., U. S. A.

Price \$1.00 per year or ten cents a copy.

Ad. rates—2c per word, 50c per inch, Quarter page \$1.25, Half page \$2.00, Full page \$3.50. Four times for price of three.

Vol. 13

February 1945

No. 149

FRANK LESLIE'S BOYS OF AMERICA

Part Three

by W. M. Burns

Since writing Part Two of this article I have obtained Vol. 1 to Vol. 8 complete, plus the first five issues of Vol. 9 of Boys of America. In other words I now have them from No. 1 to No. 51. Mostly in four huge bound volumes, but with a few loose single issues, still brave in their original colored wrappers, (or covers should we say). These latter not in nearly as good condition as their brothers, bound without original wrappers. However I have located a volume containing these very issues that I need to replace my poor copies, and I have high hopes of obtaining it.

While I had wonderful luck in compiling my file from No. 1 to No. 51, completing it so far, in less than four months, I have been vainly trying from that time on, another four months at least, to locate the other few issues that I need. I am told that they ran to only 58 or 59 issues, still I cannot locate, or obtain these few issues that I need to complete my set. (Help fellows.)

In correction to the above, I wish to state that my four huge volumes are bound without original covers. It is only my badly mauled, and mishandled, loose copies that have original colored covers. The volume I am on the track of will likewise be without colored covers. I have located the source of several of the tales in my Boys of America.

"Alone in the Pirate Lair," was the "smash" serial starting in Edwin J. Bretts' famous Boys of England which,

so I have read, appeared with the first issue dated, Nov. 24, 1866. After it had had its run in Boys of England, Brett again reprinted it as a Sixpence Novel under title of "Jack Rushton; or, Alone in the Pirates Lair." I just recently got in a copy of this novel. It is the same size as the once famous Hagarth House Novels, but unlike the latter, does not have colored covers, but a blue tinted, one color cover. In Boys of America, the tale started in the Aug. 1874 issue under title of "Alone in the Pirates Lair." The first installment ran to 14 pages and 14 chapters. It ended in the October issue, a run of three months, with a total of 36 chapters. This gives one an idea of the long installments of serials in Boys of America.

Boys of England was also the first to appear with "On and Off the Stage; or, Which Was Right?" Unfortunately I do not know the actual date that it first appeared. But in Vol. 1, No. 1, Boys of America, dated Oct. 1873, it appeared under title of "Stage-Struck; or, Which Was Right?" This likewise ran to three issues only. Unfortunately neither of the above stories bear an authors name.

While my run of Boys of America contains 34 complete serials, I am positive that at least half of them appeared first in English journals. The remaining half were written by Hemyng after he came to America to write for Leslie and by various other American authors, such as Col. Chris Forest, Stanley McKenna, Nathan D. Urner, etc.

On the inside front cover of the Feb. 1874 issue, is a letter from Bracebridge Hemyng, dated New York, Dec. 23, 1873. It is too long for reproduction

here, but is addressed "To The Boys and Girls of America," and states that he is going to write exclusively for Leslie, American tales about "Jack Harkway." As a matter of fact while over here, he wrote many other fine tales, aside from the "Harkaway" and "Lightheart" tales.

This issue contains a fine photograph of Heming and a biographical sketch about his earlier writings, which by the way, were not all stories for boys and girls. Also there is a full page picture of Heming coming down the gang plank of the steamer that brought him over here, being welcomed by the boys of New York.

While I cannot become interested in the modern tale of English schoolboy life, I delighted in the old time tales of that type. My run of Boys of America contain some fine ones of that type such as "Jack Harkaway at Oxford," "Benjamin Badlucks Schooldays," "Wild Tom of Cambridge," "My Schooldays," "Pat O'Connors' Schooldays," etc. Incidentally, "Pat O'Connors' Schooldays" was published by Brett as a Sixpenny Novel and also probably had a previous run in one of his weekly journals. Captain Marryat is represented also with one of his best tales, titled "Poor Jack," in serial form.

I have the above tale also in a cloth bound book published in London in 1853, by Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Convent Garden. My book has over 30 full page illustrations, while the serial in my Boys of America contains nearly 100 illustrations. A description of the contents of No. 1, Boys of America might be of interest to those never having seen any of them. This first issue is dated October, 1873. At the top of page 1, we have the $2\frac{1}{2}$ x 8 masthead, "Frank Leslies Boys of America," and below a half page illustration. This with the heading takes up the larger part of the page. Such space as is left is devoted to Chapter 1, of the famous old classic "Jack Harkaways School-Days." This opening tale runs to 16 pages and 14 chapters. This is followed by the opening chapters of "Stage-Struck; or, Which Was Right?" The opening chapters of this one ran to another 16 pages, with 14 chapters likewise. Next came the opening chapters of "Rob, the Rover; or, The Mid Among the Pirates." (A bit of comment here.)

We are told that for years Leslie was held in high esteem by parents who were very careful of what their children read. YET for a number of years, his publications for youthful readers were held as a model for the "blood and thunder" publishers of youthful literature, to use as a model. (A Fact)

Now "Rob, the Rover," is one of the most bloodthirsty tales I ever read. Beadle, Tousey, Munro or Street & Smith never published anything worse along that line in my opinion. Yet a lot of them were frowned upon, even banished from the U. S. Mail. Yet Leslies first issue of Boys of America contained a pirate story equal, even surpassing, a lot of pirate tales in sheer ferocity, ever put out by the above named publishers. "Rob the Rover," in its first installment ran to 15 pages and 13 chapters. The above three named serials averaged four half page illustrations each. The remaining 17 pages are devoted to short stories and short fact-news articles. Notable among these is a three page story of early Indian-Pioneer life in Colonial Virginia. In this one issue are 42 illustrations, including two full page illustrations and at least 12 half page illustrations. The rest are all small ones taking up about one eighth of a page to a quarter page. All reading is in real fine print, three columns to the page. Now in its entirety, this has been a very long, and perhaps tedious article to many. To others it perhaps has been a revelation of a fine old time publication for boys.

While I trade, read and enjoy a lot of serial papers of the bygone era, I never had any urge to collect any of them, due to their bulk and large size and general deterioration. Yet I mean to complete my file of Boys of America, and not only complete them, but keep them. They are not bulky, not as large as a Beadles Dime Library, and printed on the old time rag pulp paper which will keep for many years to come.

"PLUCK & LUCK (Reprints) and Earlier Happy Days Stories

by Robert H. Smeltzer

Any of our readers who in boyhood days reveled in the serial (week to week; continued in our next) stories of dear old "HAPPY DAYS" may, or may not be aware that many of the

H. D. serial stories were reprinted in Pluck & Luck.

Let us check on some of the sterling writers of those stories, by names, and in some cases their "nom-de-plume"; for instance James C. Merritt, Ex Fire Chief Warden, Allyn Draper, General James A. Gordon, An Old Scout, Allyn, Arnold, Captain Thomas H. Wilson, Richard R. Montgomery, Berton Bertrew.

As my memory serves me, #1490 of P. & L., Captain Thunder, or The Boy Treasure Hunters of Robber's Reef, appeared in Happy Days; also Shore Line Sam, the Young Southern Engineer, Big Bone Island, The Midnight Alarm, or the Boys of Old No. 9, Lost on a Whaler, Dave and the Diamond, Sandy & Slim; Captain Jim & Pilot Joe, or the Rival Steamboats of Crooked Lake; Peter, the Wild Boy, Governor Gus, or the War on No Man's Land, Lost on the Pirate's Isle, or the Ship that Sailed on Friday, The House of Skulls, or the Boy Miners of Buzard Bay, The Haunted Toll Gate House, or the Ghosts of the River Road, The Boys of Ninevah, Sam and his Shadow, Tom the Tower Boy, The Secret of Page 99, The 13th of October 1863 and Running with No. 6.

Mind you, all these stories did not appear in Happy Days beneath all of the above titles; just the same as reprinted novels have appeared beneath a change in the name of the author, but review the above names; what a galaxy of writing stars did FRANK TOUSEY get together to win him fame and fortune in dime noveldom years and years ago; when we were boys, and we would have felt ourself a millionaire to have a quarter in one week to invest in five 5c novels of the time. I know that my limit was two 5c weeklies in one week.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Tousey firm was reaping a harvest on their 5c novels of the time; Norman L. Munro and Street & Smith were also in the game, as we must all agree. These three firms were the fountain-heads from which sprung thousands upon thousands of boys weekly novels, week by week, as regular as clock-work.

To switch off to the story papers of Tousey and Munro, as many will recall, Tousey published "Happy Days," while the Munro firm put out "Golden Hours." In an exciting race for supremacy both firms offered

worth while premiums in their coupon saving contests. In the case of Golden Hours they ran a weekly "swap" column, and many of the boys had articles to swap for "G. H." contest coupons. On the other hand, Happy Day did not have an "exchange" column. I was fortunate to win a Dewey (Remember the Maine) watch; a Camera and an original pen and ink original drawing of the cover page picture. I also won a Bike in a Happy Days contest.

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MORE ON THE GOLDEN HOURS

by Harry A. Weill

Ralph P. Smith's Happy Hours, issue of November-December 1929, he states that the first 17 issues were girl' stories; from this I was led to believe that they were smaller in size, (like Nick Carter), but find that the general format and typographical lay-out is practically the same as the numbers which appeared subsequently. At that early date Scriptus did not occupy the center page with his scientific and historical discourses, nor had "Fred" contributed his "Bones" Series. They are, however, in an issue of 1889, which also contains an installment of Hancock's "The Young Reporter," and this, together with a number of some years later with a Talk to Readers of Golden Hours by Victor St. Clair, I shall tender to Mr. Hurd, who has made mention of some of these facts in his "Open Letter on the writers of G. H." in the July 1943 issue of the Round-Up, and who will be delighted to receive them. Also a short story by "Fred Thorpe, Junior," who was none other than the son of Albert and who continued the series on Bones after the death of his father, Edgar Franklin Stearns.

Well, as may have been imagined, these juvenile stories did not produce the thrill which they did 50 years or more ago, (Golden Hours) in fact I just glanced over them and wondered how I could have ever been intrigued by the impossible situations created by the authors; the answer is probably that the youthful mind accepts everything at face value, does not delve into the why and wherefor, nor analyze underlying causes. History repeated itself, and to a psychologist it would have been an example of atavism in that I discarded the fiction and read the comics, following the procedure of my childhood days, but for vastly different reasons. A word of caution to whomsoever, of advancing years, may come in possession of these Munro publications; the miniscule type in which they are printed is extremely trying upon the eyesight, and it is not advisable that protracted reading be indulged in. For a person my age, my eyesight is remarkably keen and can read signs on the movie houses 2 or 3 blocks distant, something which persons considerably younger are unable

to do- but do not wish to subject them to any undue strain.

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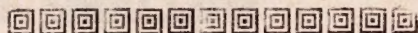
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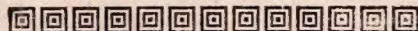
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